R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 012 702 SP 001 118

EPISODE TEACHING--A RATIONALE FOR INDUCTING STUDENT TEACHERS INTO THE TEACHING ACT.

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PUB DATE 23 JUL 65

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.40 10P.

DESCRIPTORS- *EPISODE TEACHING, MASTER TEACHERS, *RESOURCE TEACHERS, *STUDENT TEACHERS, *STUDENT TEACHING, *TEACHER RATING, TEACHER SUPERVISION, TEACHING METHODS, PORTLAND STATE COLLEGE

EPISODE TEACHING IS THE PRACTICE OF INITIATING STUDENT TEACHERS INTO TEACHING THROUGH THEIR OWN PERFORMANCE OF THE TEACHING ACT AS COPROFESSIONALS RATHER THAN AS DEPENDENTS. AN EPISODE IS DEFINED AS A SELF-CONTAINED EVENT, NOT PART OF AN ONGOING PROGRAM, BUT APPROPRIATE TO THE AGE LEVEL AND GENERAL INTEREST OF THE CHILDREN IN QUESTION. THE STUDENT TEACHER DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE CLASSROOM UNTIL HE IS TO DIRECT AN EPISODE, AT WHICH TIME HE IS INTRODUCED AS A RESOURCE PERSON, WITH THE MASTER TEACHER SERVING AS AN OBSERVER. IN THE EVENT OF FAILURE, THE STUDENT TEACHER'S INITIATION INTO TEACHING CAN BE INTERRUPTED WITHOUT UPSETTING THE ONGOING CLASSROOM PROGRAM, SINCE HIS WORK IS SELF-CONTAINED. IN THE EVENT OF SUCCESS, OTHER EPISODES CAN FOLLOW UNTIL THEIR CUMULATIVE EFFECT IS TO ESTABLISH THE STUDENT TEACHER AS TEACHER OF ONE SUBJECT. THE SEQUENCE IS FROM ENRICHMENT TEACHING AS A RESOURCE PERSON TO FINAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE TEACHING IN THAT SUBJECT. ULTIMATELY, THE JUSTIFICATION FOR EPISODE TEACHING AS A WAY OF INDUCTION IS THAT IT CENTERS ALL THE EFFORT AND ATTENTION UPON THE TEACHING ACT. (AF)

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EPISODE TEACHING: A RATIONALE FOR INDUCTING STUDENT TEACHERS INTO THE TEACHING ACT.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

SP 001 118

INTRODUCTION

At Portland State College a Professional Quarter was instituted during the 1961-62 academic year. The Professional Quarter is an alternate route for taking methods courses and about one-half of our elementary teaching candidates choose this route. The purpose of this paper is not to describe the Professional Quarter but it is important to note that the students participate in about 100 hours of observation, bit teaching, small group teaching and teaching the total class for brief periods of time. For those students Episode Teaching is faster, more rewarding, and a more profitable way to begin teaching. We think the plan may have merit for all student teachers.[1]

THE CONVENTIONAL APPROACH

A conventional way of inducting a student teacher into the ongoing program of teacher and class has been in vogue at Portland State College and other Teacher Education Institutions in this area. Ordinarily the student teacher is thought of as dependent, un-ready or even inadequate; therefore, his role is generally that of the apprentice who will learn the steps of the trade as they are pointed out to him. Around him seems to be a galaxie of professionals who will show him the ropes little by little as he makes his way from modest to more taxing responsibilities. This understanding of the

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[1]The phrase "Episode Teaching" and the basic rationale for inducting the student teacher into the teaching act, were devised by Mr. Lundy during the 1964-65 school year in an effort to meet the needs of student teachers who had completed the Professional Quarter.

student teacher-master teacher relationship has given rise to the following widely practiced routine for student teachers:

1. initiation by observation
2. monitorial duty
3. participation in the class first as a pupil
4. bit teaching with small, usually slow groups
5. assistant to master teaching in on-going program
6. gradual involvement in full-teaching
7. eventual full-time teaching -- usually the last two weeks

There are advantages which tend to support and perpetuate this general operation of student teacher induction. Basically the plan is based on the belief that the student teacher must be given a place of security through acquaintance and gradualism and that the learning of teaching skills or procedures comes about through observation and copying from those who are expert. Its advantages are that:

1. the student teacher becomes familiar with classroom routines, master teacher and students
2. it allows for a gradual building of confidence
3. accepted ways of teaching are spelled out for the student teacher, i. e., he has a pattern to follow

Conversely there are disadvantages. Fundamentally the plan contradicts a prevailing philosophy underlying accepted practices in education in the United States today, i.e., the plan is not

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sufficiently concerned with individual differences and experience centered learning in the student teacher. Its disadvantages are that:

1. the student teacher becomes established as "teacher's helper" rather than a co-professional
2. the readiness of the student teacher is not exploited
3. the plan depresses creativity and resourcefulness and encourages dependency
4. the plan does not give the student teacher a clear, distinct exposure to the teaching act

THE EPISODE APPROACH

The basis for this way of inducting student teachers into the teaching act is a philosophy emphasizing individual differences and experience-centered learning. It is as much concerned with readiness in the student teacher as with goals for student teacher performance. It presumes the productiveness of self-corrective behavior and asks that the student teacher bring to his task clearly defined objectives and resources which he will explore and develop. In short, the student teacher is looked upon as his own best resource, prepared almost to the point of saturation with recent college course work and a long time inner preparation for his initial teaching experience. This readiness is essential to his success. It can best be exploited by giving him his own sphere in which to perform.

An episode is a self-contained event. It is not part of an on-going program, but it is something appropriate to the age-level and general interest of the children in question. The topic and

subject area of the episode are derived from an interest or strength of the student teacher and he confers with his master teacher as to its suitability and timing.

The student teacher does not appear in the classroom until he is there to do an episode, then he is introduced as a resource person. The class has been prepared for his coming and name tags for the class are used, the class is in his charge and the master teacher is an observer. In this setting the resources of the student teacher are his readiness and those carefully chosen techniques and procedures which he has laid out for his teaching purpose. There is a degree of anxiety but the anxiety is tuned to an aura of excitement and satisfaction in having finally laid hold of the prize. His planning is his own with only general guidelines or limits set by existing classroom circumstances; therefore, he presents himself as the kind of teacher he wants to be and performs in accord with a model of his own choice.

Should there be a failure in an episode the student teacher can interrupt his initiation into teaching without upsetting the on-going classroom program since his work is self-contained and not an intermingled part of the regular teaching. On the other hand, in the event of success, the first episode can be followed by others until their accumulative effect is to establish the student teacher as the teacher of one subject or area of interest.[2]

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[2] It should be noted here that if the master teacher helps the student teacher to plan in the area of the student teacher's greatest strength and confidence, the initial episode has a greater chance for success. Although success is the more desirable outcome, the student teacher must know that he has the right to fail without damage to his status or to his relationship with the master teacher.

Episode teaching is repeated until a trend has been established which can convert to on-going teaching. When this happens that subject area is taken on by the student teacher and in this way, successive subjects or cores are assumed until the student teacher has worked into the maximum teaching responsibility. The sequence is from enrichment teaching as a resource person in self-contained episodes to sequential episodes establishing a trend or direction and finally the responsibility for the on-going teaching in that subject or core. Each subject is assumed in this same fashion; episode to trend to on-going teaching.

Episode teaching, in brief, is the practice of initiating student teachers into teaching through their own performance of the teaching act as co-professionals rather than as dependents. It looks to readiness and learning from his own products as the resource from which the student teacher will gain impetus and direction. Some of the advantages of this approach are:

1. independent, co-professional status
2. emphasis upon the teaching act
3. exploiting the readiness of student teachers
4. providing initial success
5. providing substantive material for supervision
6. maximum acceleration into full responsibility
7. operational consonance between philosophy of education and practice

8. optimum import into teaching of the student teacher's college education

9. identification of deficiencies or inappropriate practice as the student teacher's own product

10. clarification of the master teacher's role as a person who will supervise through analysis and feedback rather than demonstration instruction

Our experience with the episode to date leads us to believe that it does in fact avoid the disadvantages of the traditional initiation process. What does it do to those who are involved? Feedback from student teachers indicates that a very high percentage strongly prefer initiation through the episode. Most students have experienced early success, and although this success was later diminished it remained as a standard by which to judge themselves and an attainable goal which they could struggle to regain. It was their own doing so they felt it could be achieved again. There has been no report from student teachers that not having more personalized acquaintance with the children is a problem. All have expressed a preference for the episode over descriptions of regular programs reported to them by other student teachers. Uppermost in the minds of student teachers have been two things (1) they enjoy the non-dependent relationship with the master teacher and (2) they value the freedom to import into the classroom implications and methods derived from recent college courses.

In contrast to this there is feedback from students in conventional programs that:

1. they are bored and dissatisfied with the early phases of their experience

2. there is difficulty in getting started from someone else's home base, doing things in a way which belongs to another

3. the problem of establishing their own authority and adequacy is difficult

4. much time and energy is diverted to finding what it is the master teacher wants

5. erosion of the idealism and a commitment to accepted philosophy sometimes occurs under tension between "practical" versus "ideal" considerations when urged to "do it this way" by experienced teachers.

In summary, episode teaching is an attempt to structure the relationship between the master teacher and student teacher so that it more nearly approximates a peer relationship with all the freedom from dependence and un-equal power which that implies. It calls for two things (1) master teachers who are accepting and flexible in their inter-personal relations and who see their value to the student teacher in terms of analytical expertise rather than posing as models for imitation and (2) student teachers who are ready--in the formal sense of readiness--to teach. If a student teacher is to enjoy a non-dependent, self-actualizing role he must be adequate for a much greater task than that of imitative behavior.

This way of inducting people into the profession implies a professional supervisor operating on a new level with skills and new understandings appropriate to his role. It implies educational preparation in a new dimension that is functional as well as theoretical and this too inclines toward a concept of induction akin to clinical practice. The whole thing is based on readiness for

professional behavior and as such requires freedom to learn from one's own product and to be supervised through skillful analysis rather than apprenticeship procedures.

Ultimately the justification for episode teaching as a way of induction is that it centers all the effort and attention upon the teaching act. The conventional emphasis upon preparing for initial teaching by getting to know the children tends to be-cloud the nature of inter-action in the teaching act. If we are to produce professional teachers who are conversant with the nature of learning, who have skills and behaviors which belong to the teaching act then we must set out to induct candidates into a relationship with children which stems from this kind of interaction, i. e., interaction in teaching and learning.

Typical induction has set out to foster a welter of personalized relationships between the student teacher and the children which are then brought together and exploited, i. e., used to bolster, limit, give meaning that otherwise would not exist for this teacher's teaching. Social workers and psychologists sometimes talk of the seductive behavior of teachers and we might add to this the effect of accumulated power. The group is controlled out of an accumulation of power exerted on an individual basis. The episode takes away from the student teacher this way of building a relationship with his class and turns him to professional considerations. His relationship with the children must come from the teaching act.

JRH:lo
7/23/65

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